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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
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TO : Director of Central Intelligence

FROM : Assistant Director for R. & E.

SUBJECT: Possible transportation crisis at Vienna.

DATE: SEP 28 1948

Executive Registry
0-1403

1. Current Soviet actions raise the possibility that the USSR may undertake the creation of a "Berlin" situation in the city of Vienna. The recent Soviet charge that US aircraft flying the Prague-Vienna air corridor had committed eighteen "violations" (since disproved after investigation by US authorities) may be indicative of a Soviet intention to establish a record of alleged "violations" which may later be used to justify restrictive action in prohibiting or limiting Western air access to Vienna. It is appropriate, therefore, to examine the transportation problem which would face the Western Powers should the USSR attempt a blockade of Vienna.

2. Present quadripartite agreements provide the Western Powers with access to Vienna along specific rail, road, and air routes for the movement of supplies from the western zones of Austria. The primary difference in the case of Vienna, as compared to Berlin, lies in the fact that all air bases allocated to the Western Powers are located in the Soviet Zone, thus necessitating surface linkage through the Soviet Zone into the city of Vienna. Should the USSR elect to restrict Western access to Vienna, any one or a combination of the following courses may be pursued: restriction or denial of access by road, rail, or air on the grounds that the Western Powers have abused privileges or violated agreements; discovery of "technical" difficulties; contention of inadequacy of present "flight safety" regulations; and disagreement over interpretation of agreements.

3. By denying the use of rail routes (now handling practically all the shipments of civil and military supplies from the Western Zones into the Western sectors of Vienna) and closing off the highways to Vienna, the facilities of present air bases would be negated, and the Western Powers would be forced to construct "emergency" strips within their sectors of Vienna. If the USSR decides on this step, it will probably take concurrent action to interrupt the present arrangements under which food is distributed in Vienna by the Austrian Government. While there is no presently expressed obligation on the Western Powers to feed the population of their Vienna sectors, the USSR could in effect force the Western Powers to bring in food from air bases in the Western Zones. To accomplish this, the USSR would need only to subject the continued movement of food from the Soviet Zone to obnoxious conditions which the Western Powers cannot tolerate.

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4. The Kremlin probably believes that with the limited capacity of emergency facilities the Western Powers could not fully supply their Vienna sectors while the Berlin airlift operations are still necessary, and that it is in a position, therefore, to discredit the Western Powers in Austria and increase the chances of Western collapse in Berlin. ORE believes that the USSR unquestionably has the capability of precipitating the crisis analyzed in this memorandum and that the Kremlin has given careful consideration to such action. On the other hand, ORE believes that the chances are definitely against this eventuality materializing in the near future.

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